

Jaques Cortelyou
(Second Generation - b.1660, d. May 3, 1731)
Excerpts from The Cortelyou Genealogy by John Van Zandt Cortelyou

This Jaques resided on his father's tract in New Utrecht. He was living there in 1687 when the British authorities caused all residents to sign the oath of allegiance to the King of England. This was a virtual census of the colony. In signing the oath, "Jaques Corteljou, Junior" stated he was a "native." That is, he was born in America.

This Jaques Corteljou not only co-operated with the church people as his father had done, but he was a member of the church and was active in its service. On March 27, 1689, "Jaques Coreljou" is recorded as having joined the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church on confession. He is here listed under Midwout (the Dutch name for Flatbush) but, as a matter of fact, he is believed to have lived at New Utrecht only.

In 1695, Jaques paid twelve guilders to the Reformed Dutch Church of New Utrecht in memory of his mother.

Jaques was a deacon in the New Utrecht church in 1696 and an elder in the years 1701-03, 1718-20, and 1722.

From a receipt dated January 10, 1701, to Captain Jaques Corteljou and Captain John Van Dyck, Elders, it appears that New Utrecht paid 562 guilders and 10 stuivers, wampum value, for one-half year's salary to Dominie Lupardus. Agreement as to amount of the new dominie's salary was signed by Jaques and Pieter Cortelyou and 28 others.

Jaques's name was on a petition sent in 1702 by the Elders of the Dutch church...to call a minister, out of the province or from Holland, to instruct them in their mother tongue, since their minister had died. A plat of seats in the New Utrecht church, dated February 17, 1720/21, shows five "women's" places and three "men's" places assigned to Jaques Corteljou. These eight chairs are well scattered, only two (men's) being adjacent. Some of these assignments may refer to Jaques, son of Pieter.

It is unfortunate that no contemporary observer has left character studies of the Cortelyou brothers and sisters of the second generation. But familiarity with the records, of their time must soon lead to the conclusion that there was a marked difference in temperment between Jaques and his brother Pieter. Perhaps it was the difference which enabled them to live under the same roof and to operate the Najack farm and ferry upon what appears to have a partnership basis.

Pieter, as will be seen later, was a dynamic individual, who had absorbed sufficient education from his father to be a successful surveyor, a dealer in real estate and a county judge. Obviously, he "took after" the first Jaques. Jaques, on the other hand, though older, and having the same opportunities, was less venturesome. The Dutch Towns on Long Island were his world for the most part. And it may be guessed that the Dutch characteristics of his mother predominated in his makeup.

That the second-generation Jaques was unable to speak English is indicated by a petition which he filed with the colonial authorities on April 29, 1714. This petition still preserved at Albany (Manuscripts, vol. 59, p. 45), prays: "...to be relieved of the obligation of acting as constable for the town of New Utrecht, to which he has been maliciously chosen; he being unacquainted with the English dialect."

Not only did Jaques Cortelyou act with his brother Pieter in the settlement of their father's estate, but both of them are mentioned in records in connection with other estate matters.

During his lifetime, the first Jaques Cortelyou and his sons operated a ferry for wayfarers who wished to cross the Narrows. At the start this was doubtless done on an informal basis. But as time went on and the second-generation Jaques and Pieter Cortelyou continued to operate the ferry, they found themselves subject to regulation as a public utility. Not alone was this true, but they also found themselves threatened with competition from an unexpected source within their own family circle. This probably caused indignation and heart-burnings along the bluff at Najack, for on at least two occasions, Jaques and Pieter were obliged to petition the colonial authorities for protection in their franchise.

The Calendar of Historical Manuscripts notes the following under date of November 9, 1710: "Petition. Peter Cartelyou, for himself, and on behalf of his brother Jaques Cartelyou, for a continuance of their right to the ferry between New Utrecht and Staten Island, and against granting same to Hendrick Hendricks."

This petition was addressed to Governor Robert Hunter. The copy in the archives at Albany sets forth, in part:

"...your excellencys Petition'rs, they having now Boats and other Conveniences for the Purpose to their great Charge and Expences and always having had the Privilege and benefit of transporting of men & horses from their Landing to Staten Island and other Places Backwards and forwards..."

The Hendrick Hendricks to whom they objected as a competing ferryman was the brother-in-law of Jaques and Pieter, the third husband of their sister, Helena. Whether Hendrick Hendricks was a competitor throughout the decade following 1710 does not appear from the records. On November 7, 1719, a patent was issued, as recorded in Liber 8 of Patents, p. 253, Secretary of State's Office, Albany. In part, it read:

"Whereas Jacques Cortelyou and Peter Cortelyou, at Jacques Bay in Kings County upon Nassau Island in the Province of New York is Situate Opposite to Staten Island and has found by Experience to Lye very Convenient for a Ferry Which they and those whose Estates they have Used for these Forty Years past to the Great Ease and Benefit of all Travellers passing to Staten Island to Nassau Island and from Nassau Island to Staten Island in the Province of New York And that they may not be Molested in Exercising that usage which has Proved so Beneficial to his Majesties Subjects for so many years and for their further Incouragement therein KNOW YEE that our Especial Grace Certain knowledge and Meer Motion Wee have Given Granted Ratified and Confirmed and do by these Presents for us our Heirs and Successors Give Grant Ratifie and Confirme unto our Loving Subjects Jaxques Cortelyou and Peter Cortelyou of New Utrecht in Kings County Yeomen the free Liberty and Privilege of keeping a Ferry at the Landing Place of their aforesaid Farm between the Island of Nassau or Long Island and Staten Island for the Transportation of Men Horses and Cattle of all Sorts..."

As confirmation of the right to operate a ferry from their own farm, this patent could not very well have been broader. It did not, however, protect Jaques and Pieter Cortelyou from competing ferries at other locations. In fact, records indicate that during at least a part of their lifetime, there was a ferry to Staten Island from Yellow Hook, north of Najack, in the direction of Brooklyn.

The importance of the ferry or ferries across the Narrows as a travel route in colonial times was much greater than would at first appear. Today, the traveler approaching New York from Philadelphia or points in central New Jersey is accustomed to the numerous arteries across the rivers and marsh-lands before reaching Jersey City. In earlier days these routes did not exist and the tidal rivers and vast salt meadows effectively blocked land communication. Thus it became a problem of keeping to the roads which were on high ground, and this, in turn, made it entirely natural for a traveler leaving New York to go first to Brooklyn, then to the Narrows, then across Staten Island, using other ferries to get back to New Jersey mainland at Elizabethport, Perth Amboy, or elsewhere.

The Staten Island end of the Narrows ferry is shown on early maps as being somewhat farther north than the Long Island landing. This meant that a diagonal course had to be followed. Strong tides and biting gales can stir up quite a sea. Peter and Jaques must, therefore, have had many exciting experiences as they rowed and sailed across this bit of water in all weathers for half a century. Travel was probably not heavy, however, and the voyager passing through the Narrows today may look at the Bay Bridge and Fort Hamilton shore where the Cortelyou's lived, then glance at the Staten Island side and try to guess that sort of signal was used to attract the ferrymen's attention when someone wished to come across. The distance is too great for a horn or bell to be dependable, so it is more than likely that a flag was used. Anyone who has had experience with modern ferries in remote locations knows that it is sometimes necessary for the ferryman to drop his duties in the barn or the harvest field before he can attend to the wants of infrequent travelers. In fact, this Narrows ferry must have been a truly family institution, -- with everyone trained to glance frequently toward the landing place on the Staten Island shore, so that the wayfarer bound for Long Island would not be kept waiting for too long a time.

The patent of 1719 does not close the history of the Narrows ferry so far as the Cortelyou family is concerned. The patent was for a period of twenty-one years - or until 1740. By that time the second-generation Jaques had died and Pieter was engrossed with other interests. There were, however, two different third-generation Jacques Cortelyou's at the Narrows in April 1739, sons of Jaques and Pieter, respectively. These joined with "Harmanus Berckelo and Simon Simonson of New Utrecht" in presenting a petition for "land under water and privilege to keep a ferry at the Narrows." This petition also covered rates of ferriage.

This Jaques Cortelyou was not only a partner with his brother Pieter in conducting the Narrows ferry, but they occupied the same house and it is fitting that this structure, which sheltered successive generations of Cortelyous continuously for a century and a half, should be considered at some length.

First of all, it must be clearly understood that this was the Cortelyou home on the bluff, the site chosen by the pioneer Jaques when he laid out the land around New Utrecht. It is not to be

confused with "The Old Stone House at Gowanus," which was in later years usually referred to as "The Cortelyou House."

The Cortelyou home at the Narrows was arranged for the occupancy of two families, living side by side. There may have been periods when only one family dwelt there, but we know that the second-generation Jaques and Pieter shared it. We know that the first-generation Simon and his son Peter Simon occupied it jointly for many years. And we know, too, that the seventh-generation Peter V.W. and his brother John Rapelye Cortelyou lived in the old Cortelyou home until they sold it in the middle of the nineteenth century and removed to Six Mile Run, where they again lived together on the same farm.

Harold Donaldson Eberlein recognized the importance of the old Cortelyou home when writing his book *Manor Houses and Historic Homes on Long Island and Staten Island*. He not only shows a picture of the now-vanished structure, but devotes a chapter to it under the title, "The Cortelyou House, New Utrecht." In part, he says: "the Labadists' allusion (in 1679) to a 'good stone house,' built after the fire in the village of New Utrecht, apparently did not refer to the house shown in the illustration. The establishment where Dankers and Sluyter had sleeping quarters of such questionable comfort allotted them in the barn, was replaced by a more commodious dwelling at a date subsequent to their visit.

There is occasional mention of a stone house built in 1693, but, so far as can be ascertained, the house of the illustration was built and occupied about 1700 by Pieter Cortelyou, son of Jacques, the immigrant. This abode, which Pieter Cortelyou reared, is said to have been constructed in part from the stone of the 1693 house.

Lacking any infallibly definite data on the subject, what seems more likely is that the house of the illustration was built by Pieter Cortelyou somewhere about 1693, and that part of the stone used in its construction came from the earlier stone house of Jacques Cortelyou.

The building of a house in those days was an even more serious undertaking than it is now, and it is scarcely probable that a dwelling of 1693 would be replaced by another in 1700... What is more likely still is that there were successive additions, and that some portion of the structure shown in the illustration represented the stone house of Jacques Cortelyou, spoken of by Dankers and Sluyter.

Up to the time of the Revolution, the history of the house and its occupants appears to have been generally prosperous and uneventful. With the breaking out of hostilities, however, and all the consequent opportunities for romances, matters changed, and from that date onward sundry interesting happenings were connected with the fabric."

An abstract of the will of this Jaques Cortelyou is given in N.Y. Hist. Soc. Collections, Abstracts of Wills, vol. 3, pp. 30 and 31. This is as follows:

"Liber 11, Page 130. In the name of God, Amen. This 4th of March, 1726/7, I, Jacques Cortelyou, of New Utrecht, in the County of Kings, being at the present time weak in body. I leave to my wife Altye all real and personal estate in New Utrecht during her life or widowhood, and after her death to my son Jacques. I leave to my son Hendrick, all that lot of land in the County of Somerset, in New Jersey, Bounded southeast by the road, southwest by land of Daniel

Grigg, northeast by Elbert Stoothoff, northwest by Peter Corteliou, and containing 300 acres. After the death of my wife, the personal estate is to be divided among my five children, Jacques, Hendrick, Greetje, Neeltie, and Mary. My son Jacques, in consideration of what I left him, is to pay to my daughter Mary L350. 'If my loving wife should remarry, she shall have to take with her a good bed, and bedstead, and furniture thereto belonging and a cupboard and 1/6 of the personal estate.' And I appoint my wife executor." Witnesses: Peter Corteliou, William Borkels, S. Garritsen. Proved May 3, 1731.